

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 ACDA-05 EB-07 /082 W

----- 117500

R 121820Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4072

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ALGIERS 0677

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, AG

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL PRESS SURFACES NEW OPPOSITION GROUP

REF: (A) ALGIERS 0652, (B) ALGIERS 0663

1. SUMMARY: REGIME HAS COMMENTED EDITORIALY ON "APPEAL TO ALGERIAN PEOPLE" BY FOUR FORMER PROMINENT POLITICIANS. COMMENT DISMISSES MEN AS BELONGING TO OLDER GENERATION INCAPABLE OF UNDERSTANDING REVOLUTION BUT TREATS THEM WITH CERTAIN, LIMITED RESPECT. ALL FOUR ARE UNDER HOUSE ARREST AND THERE ARE SIGNS THAT REGIME AGITATED AT THEIR ACTION. APPEAL CAN BE REGARDED AS SIMPLE ACT OF COURAGE. STILL, WE CONTINUE TO ASK OURSELVES WHY THESE MEN CHOSE TO ACT AS THEY DID WHEN THEY DID. WE HAVE NO SURE ANSWER. END SUMMARY.

2. ON MARCH 12, ALGERIAN PRESS SERVICE (APS) EDITORIAL ENTITLED "REAL GUARD ACTION" DISCUSSES ANTI-REGIME "APPEAL TO ALGERIAN PEOPLE" THAT CIRCULATED BRIEFLY IN ALGIERS EARLIER THIS WEEK (REFTELS). EDITORIAL DOES NOT MENTION NAMES OF BENYOUCEF BEN KHEDDA, FERHAT ABBAS, CHEIKH MOHAMED KHEIREDDINE, AND HOCINE LAHOUEL, WHO APPARENTLY SIGNED APPEAL, BUT PIECE CLEARLY REFTER TO THEM.

3. EDITORIAL MAKES FOLLOWING POINTS:

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A. WITH ALGERIAN REVOLUTION TARGET FOR IMPERIALISM AND ITS PAWNS, REACTIONARY AND RIGHT-WING ELEMENTS WITHIN COUNTRY ARE SEEKING TO REOPEN OPTIONS TO ALGERIAN PEOPLE AND TO PREACH COUNTER REVOLUTION IN NAME OF PSEUDO-LIBERALISM.

B. SIGNERS OF TRACT AND THEIR HABITS WELL KNOWN. THEY BELONG TO ANOTHER GENERATION OF POLITICAL PARTY FACTIONALISM AND PATERNALISM. HAVING JOINED NOVEMBER 1954 REVOLUTION AFTER IT BEGAN, THEY DID NOT SEE THAT REVOLUTION WAS A TRAIN WHICH WOULD NOT STOP ONCE INDEPENDENCE ACHIEVED AND THAT COUNTRY COULD NOT BE RECONQUERED BY BOURGEOISIE.

C. REVOLUTIONARY ROLE OF THESE MEN DOES NOT MAKE THEM INCARNATION OF POPULAR CONSCIENCE. THEY ARE PASSE.

D. NEW NATIONAL CHARTER WILL MOVE COUNTRY FARTHER ALONG ROAD TO SOCIALISM THAN ANY OF CHANGES CONTEMPLATED BY ALGERIAN REPUBLIC ANNOUNCED 20 YEARS AGO.

E. THIS ATTEMPT TO STIR UP TROUBLE WILL BENEFIT ONLY THOSE SEEKING TO END NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER AND TO BRING ABOUT SUBSEQUENT BORDER RECTIFICATION AND REINTRODUCTION OF CAPITALISM IN ALGERIA.

4. EDITORIAL ONLY PUBLIC REFERENCE SO FAR TO BEN KHEDDA APPEAL WHICH HAS BEEN REPORTED BY INTERNATIONAL NEWS MEDIA. DIPLOMATIC SOURCES HERE SPECULATE THAT APPEAL LEAKED OUT OF ALGERIA VIA TUNISIA. TUNISIAN EMBASSY APPARENTLY RECEIVED COPY OF DOCUMENT. MEMBERS OF COUNCILS OF REVOLUTION AND MINISTERS ALSO SAID TO HAVE RECEIVED COPIES IN MAIL.

5. ACCORDING TO MARCH 12 LE MONDE, FOUR MEN ARE UNDER HOUSE ARREST PENDING INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THEY ACTED ALONE. WE ARE TOLD THAT BEN KHEDDA'S ALGIERS' PHARMACY IS CLOSED.

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6. ALTHOUGH KHEIREDDINE AND LAHOUEL NOT OF SAME STATURE OF BEN KHEDDA AND ABBAS, THEY ARE NONETHELESS SIGNIFICANT. KHEIREDDINE HEADED ALGERIAN PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT DELEGATION TO MOROCCO DURING REVOLUTION AND RECEIVED DECORATION FROM KING HASSAN IN 1962. HE SUBSEQUENTLY DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT. LE MONDE SUGGESTS THAT HIS MOROCCAN CONNECTION CONTINUES AND ASSERTS THAT, UNLIKE MANY ALGERIANS, HIS AGRICULTURAL

HOLDINGS IN MOROCCO WERE NOT TAKEN FROM HIM IN 1973 LAND RECOVERY PROGRAM. LAHOUEL WAS, WITH BEN KHEDDA, VIOLENT OPPONENT OF MESSALI HADJ WITHIN MOVEMENT FOR TRIUMPH OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES IN 1954. HE IS ONLY ONE OF FOUR WITH CURRENT ESTABLISHMENT CONNECTIONS HAVING SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL TEXTILE CORPORATION (SONITEX) SINCE 1967.

7. SIGNS REGIME AGITATED CONTINUE. LONG-TIME FOREIGN RESIDENTS STOPPED ON MARCH 10 IN ROADBLOCK DESCRIBED ALGIERS 0663 REPORT THAT SEARCH WAS EXCRUCIATINGLY THOROUGH. DURING SEARCH, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT POLICE WERE LOOKING FOR DOCUMENTS, NATURALLY SUPPOSED TO BE COPIES OF APPEAL. ANOTHER SIGN OF UNREST WAS SUDDEN CANCELLATION OF MAJOR BUSINESS MEETING IN CONSTANTINE BY HIGH OFFICIALS OF ONE OF STATE COMPANIES. COMPANY OFFICIALS SIMPLY TOLD FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN WITH WHOM THEY SCHEDULED TO MEET THAT THEY HAD BEEN CALLED BACK TO ALGIERS AND DEPARTED HASTILY BY ROAD. FINALLY, LE MONDE REPORTS THAT BEN KHEDDA GAVE COPY OF APPEAL TO VISITING REPRESENTATIVE OF PARIS WEEKLY, JUENE AFRIQUE. UPON LEARNING OF THIS, POLICE INTERROGATED JUENE AFRIQUE MAN AT HIS HOTEL AT 5:30 A.M., SEIZED DOCUMENT AND PLACED HIM ON FIRST PLANE FOR PARIS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ALGIERS 0677

8. LE MONDE ARTICLE, WHICH WRITTEN BY PRO-ALGERIAN

CORRESPONDENT, PAUL BALTA, SPECULATES THAT APPEAL MAY HAVE BEEN DIRECTED AT TRADITIONALIST AND LIBERAL ELEMENTS WHICH ARE TROUBLED BY GROWING RADICALISM OF ALGERIAN POLICY SINCE SAHARA CRISIS. IN COMMENT WHICH PROBABLY ASSURED THAT HIS ARTICLE WOULD BE ALLOWED TO APPEAR HERE, BALTA SAYS THAT PLANS FOR NATIONAL AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND FLN CONGRESS, WHICH DESIGNED TO INSTITUTIONALIZE PRESENT REGIME, MAY HAVE INDUCED MEN TO ACT.

9. COMMENT: EDITORIAL DESCRIBED ABOVE SEEMS TO REFLECT CERTAIN RESPECT FOR MEN WHO SIGNED APPEAL. ALTHOUGH PROBABILITY THAT THEIR ACTION WOULD BENEFIT IMPERIALISM AND IMPEDE REVOLUTION IS MENTIONED, SIGNERS ARE NOT DISMISSED AS MERE STOOGES OF IMPERIALISM AND FRENCH INTELLIGENCE. THEIR ROLE IN FORMATION OF MODERN ALGERIA IS RECOGNIZED EVEN AS THEIR ERRORS ARE SPELLED OUT.

10. APPEAL CAN BE REGARDED AS SIMPLE ACT OF COURAGE ON PART OF ONCE PROMINENT POLITICIANS. ALTHOUGH SIGNERS ARE FOR MOMENT BEING TREATED GINGERLY, WE DOUBT REGIME WILL REFRAIN FROM ACTING HARSHLY IF IT FINDS THAT MEN ACTED ALONE. RECENT ALGERIAN HISTORY SHOWS THAT BOUMEDIENE CAPABLE OF ACTING RUTHLESSLY WHEN HE BELIEVES CONFIDENTIAL

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IT NECESSARY.

11. STILL, WE CONTINUE TO WONDER WHY THESE PARTICULAR MEN CHOSE TO ACT IN THE WAY THEM SEEM TO HAVE DONE AT THIS TIME. OF FOUR, ABBAS IS OLD (77), LAHOUEL SEEMINGLY WELL SET UP IN ESTABLISHMENT AND KHEIREDDINE APPARENTLY TIED TO MOROCCO. THIS LEAVES BEN KHEDDA WHO HAS BEEN A MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURE AND WHO, AS FRENCH AMBASSADOR POINTS OUT, HAS NOW DENOUNCED "CULT OF PERSONALITY" THREE TIMES IN HIS CAREER. (FIRST TWO MEN HE ATTACKED WERE MESSALI HADJ IN 1954 AND BEN BELLA IN 1962.) HOWEVER, HE HAS BEEN SILENT FOR 14 YEARS. ALGERIA MAY BE GROWING RADICAL, BUT SITUATION WOULD NOT SEEM SERIOUS ENOUGH TO INDUCE HIM, AND EVEN LESS HIS THREE ALLEGED COHORTS, TO UNDERTAKE "ACT OF CONSCIENCE" WHICH WOULD SEEM AT BEST TO HAVE MINIMAL CHANCE OF SUCCESS AND AT WORST TO BE TANTAMOUNT TO SUICIDE.PARKER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, ARRESTS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ALGIER00677
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760094-0832
From: ALGIERS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760369/aaaaciee.tel
Line Count: 217
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 ALGIERS 652, 76 ALGIERS 663
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 APR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <17 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OFFICIAL PRESS SURFACES NEW OPPOSITION GROUP
TAGS: PINT, PINS, AG, (BEN KHEDDA, BEN YOUSSEF)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006